

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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April is STD Awareness Month, Time to Get Yourself Tested

LANSING – In observance of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) Awareness Month, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) is encouraging Michigan residents who are sexually active to “Get Yourself Tested” for sexually transmitted diseases.

The national “Get Yourself Tested” (GYT) campaign raises awareness that STDs, especially chlamydia, are prevalent among teens and young adults and that testing is a critical part of prevention. This campaign offers tools and resources for testing, as well as how to talk to partners or health care providers about results.

“Because STDs often do not have recognizable symptoms, being tested is the only way to determine if you’ve contracted an STD or not,” said Olga Dazzo, Director of the MDCH. “This national “Get Yourself Tested” campaign is a wonderful tool for teens that guides them through talking about a very personal and serious issue, and helps them make the right choices to protect their health.”

Approximately 19 million new STDs occur every year in the United States; almost half of which are among young people between the ages of 15 to 24, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In Michigan in 2011, 273 cases of syphilis, 13,070 cases of gonorrhea, and 50,063 cases of chlamydia were reported. These infections disproportionately affect African Americans, men who have sex with men, and individuals who live in poverty or have limited access to healthcare. STDs cost the United States health care system as much as \$17 billion annually.

Sexually transmitted diseases pose a serious public health concern because, when untreated, these infections cause devastating health complications. As an example, chlamydia and gonorrhea are major causes of infertility among women. These and other common STDs can also increase the risk of HIV transmission for both women and men. Fortunately, many STDs are curable or manageable and individuals can be tested at their primary care doctor or for no or low cost at local health department STD clinics.

MDCH, the CDC, and the U.S. Public Health Task Force highly recommend chlamydia testing for all women age 25 and younger. Men are also strongly encouraged to be tested for chlamydia and other STDs to protect both themselves and their partners.

GYT is developed as part of It’s Your (Sex) Life, a longstanding public information partnership of MTV and the Kaiser Family Foundation, together with the CDC and Planned Parenthood Federation of America and other national partners. Resources can be found online at www.gytnow.org and more information about STDs is also available at www.michigan.gov/hivstd or www.cdc.gov/std.

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